



After falling under \$30/bbl. to 12 year lows, WTI and Brent crude prices rose above \$50 before falling back into the \$40's. Prices have been fluctuating with the value of the dollar, supply disruptions, political turmoil, declining U.S. crude production, economic uncertainty, and talk of an OPEC production cap. U.S. crude inventories grew by 5.3 million barrels this week and by 22.1 million in the past 3 weeks. Inventories of refined products grew by 1.8 million barrels this week after falling by 39.4 million barrels over the previous 6 weeks as refineries closed for maintenance and seasonal product changeovers. Since peaking at over \$50 per barrel in October, WTI and Brent are down \$6 and \$7. WTI prices rose by \$0.36 this week and Brent increased by \$1.20. WTI and Brent spot prices were \$45.56 and \$45.07 on Wednesday. WTI was \$3.88 (9.3%) above a year ago. Brent was \$4.79 (11.9%) higher. U.S. crude inventories continue to set seasonal record highs. They were 7.7% higher than a year ago and 34.3% above their five-year average. Crude inventories at Cushing, OK (where the WTI spot price is set) rose by 0.7 million barrels this week. Cushing inventories are 2.3 million barrels (4.1%) greater than a year ago and are near maximum capacity. Worldwide, crude inventories are butting up against storage capacity limits and oil tankers and barges are being used to handle the inventory surplus.

